



Queen Margaret University  
EDINBURGH

## **Working from Home Guidelines**

## **1.0 Introduction**

Working from Home is defined as employees of QMU who undertake QMU work in their own home.

Working from home is entered into on a voluntary basis between the employee and their line manager, and should normally be agreed in advance between both parties. It can often be advantageous for an employee to work at home, for example, when an employee needs to complete a written piece of work, free from interruptions, or if an employee has a meeting to attend during the working day which is near to their home

A common sense approach to when working from home is appropriate should be used. If a disagreement arises concerning the appropriateness of working from home, or where an approach to working from home is suspected of being abused by an employee or a line manager, then staff are directed to appropriate policies (disciplinary, grievance, management of performance, dignity at work etc.)

## **2.0 Eligibility**

Not all jobs are suitable to be undertaken at home, just as not all employees will be suited, or have appropriate facilities, to work from home.

Each working from home request should take into consideration the impact on the following areas:

- Colleagues and Team Members
- Student, External Partner and/or Customer experience
- Deliverable outputs
- Timetabling

All employees, in discussion with their line manager, should consider the most appropriate location for the delivery of their responsibilities, including, where appropriate, from home. QMU should provide suitable work environment on campus for all employees.

Working from home should not be used as a substitute for caring responsibilities for children, elderly relatives or dependants. Where emergency leave is required please refer to the Special Leave Policy

## **3.0 Procedure to Work from Home**

For most QMU employees, the University campus is their normal working location, although it is recognised that performance of duties may involve working from locations away from campus, for example in specialist public libraries, meetings with external partners outwith the university, or working from home.

It is expected that, where an employee decides that their duties can best be fulfilled by working from home without detriment to their students or colleagues, then this facility should be made available. These guidelines serve to ensure that where employees work from home, the performance of their duties is enhanced and neither they nor their colleagues are disadvantaged by this choice.

#### **4.0 Working Time and Contact**

It is expected that whilst working from home, employees should be contactable during normal working hours by email and/or telephone. In all circumstances the employee must ensure that adequate care arrangements are in place to enable working from home.

Any employee who is scheduled to work from home but becomes unable to work due to illness should report to their line manager by telephone in accordance with the QMU Sickness Absence Management procedure. The employee must contact their line manager to confirm when they are back at work. A return to work review will be conducted when the employee returns to work.

#### **5.0 Health and Safety in the Home**

QMU retains responsibility for the health and safety of its employees who work away from campus. The health and safety hazards associated with working from home are no different from those on campus. If an employee works at home on behalf of QMU, both their own and the QMU's duty of care for health/safety/welfare extends to cover the employee whilst they are working at home. By conducting a risk assessment (incorporating the advice of a trade union health and safety representative where appropriate) the employee and their line manager should be satisfied that health and safety conditions whilst working from home are of the same or higher standards than working on campus. Employees should not be expected to work from home due to inadequate health and safety conditions on campus, although there may be health, safety, welfare and environmental benefits from working from home. However, some risks of injury or occupational ill-health could be slightly increased when working from home by unergonomic working conditions, social isolation or lack of employer supervision.

Please see the Health and Safety Policy for further guidance.

Employees who work from home should take appropriate rest breaks, as defined by the Working Time Regulations (please refer to Flexible Working policy for details).

Where appropriate reference should be made to the QMU Lone Working Guidance via the Health and Safety intranet page.

#### **5.1 Risk Assessments**

Any employee who is working from home should undertake a risk assessment and eliminate or reduce any subsequent risks that are identified.

Where the University provides equipment for the employee to work from home it may be necessary for the home worker to return it to the University for maintenance, repair and servicing as required. Records will be kept of all equipment and such items will remain the property of the University. The University will ensure that work equipment is selected with due regard for the likely working conditions and is suitable for the purpose for which it is intended for use.

Where staff are providing their own equipment they must ensure it is fit for purpose, in good working order and that it is regularly serviced and maintained where applicable.

If risks are identified that are high or medium, the manager and the employee must discuss with their line manager the likely cost and the acceptability to the employee of making a necessary alteration, before concluding a decision whether or not to permit working at home.

Any accidents within the home during working hours must be reported by completion of an Accident/Incident Form. This must be completed and returned to the line manager within 24 hours of the accident occurring. The line manager must review and take appropriate action, and send the completed form with actions required to the Health and Safety Adviser.

The employee must report any health problems or medical conditions which may be attributable to, or aggravated by, their working conditions.

## **5.2 Renting Property**

Employees are advised to check their tenancy agreement to ensure they can work from home.

## **6.0 Information Services - Equipment and Support**

Access to systems is through remote desktop or VPN access. Access can be gained via the QMU website and staff intranet.

Anti-virus and regular patching of personal computers is essential, for example Microsoft Windows Security Essentials.

Suitable ICT equipment will be provided to any staff classed as home workers. These staff would not normally be allocated a desk or ICT equipment on campus. Staff whose normal workplace is the QMU Campus are expected to provide their own equipment to enable working from home.

Adequate broadband internet access is the responsibility of the employee. Whilst remote access is possible over wireless connections, wired connection is preferred and more reliable.

Telephone or email support is provided during Assist opening hours.

This support is limited to QMU systems and software, problems with personal computer equipment or broadband connectivity are the responsibility of the employee.

Employees should check for scheduled maintenance that may disrupt QMU services and system prior to arranging to work from home:

## **7.0 Data Protection and Security**

The employee and line manager must consider specifically how they will comply with confidentiality issues, the Data Protection Act 1998, regular data back-up procedures and QMU policy.

Use of the Remote desktop is preferred when working on sensitive data as it does not transfer data to the local computer. Use of this mechanism of remote working is highly recommended for all sensitive data work.

Computers should be locked by password when left unattended.

Shared computers should be protected by password and this should be at least as strong as your QMU network password. Employees should refer to IT for help with this.

Employees should not store or leave copies of sensitive information on the computer. If work must be done on a local copy, the file should be moved (not copied) back to QMU at the end of your session.

For further advice, please contact Assist in the first instance.

## **8.0 Insurance**

All employees who work from home are expected to take reasonable care of any QMU equipment provided.

QMU equipment must not be left unattended in public display, for example left on a seat in a car, visible to the public.

QMU will accept no liability for loss or damage to any equipment arising as a result of home working by employees, other than that which is owned by QMU. If applicable, employees who work from home are responsible for notifying their landlord/mortgage provider and their insurance company of the use of parts of their home for business use.

All employees who work from home are advised to check their own personal building and contents insurance policies for regulations and Policy on working from home.